

Abstract 500

TITLE: HIV-Positive Non-Compliant Carrier Preventive Project

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ISSUE: Approximately 30-40% of HIV positive clients tested by the Palm Beach County Health Department (PBCHD) are identified as previous positives. Many of these are recidivists returning to STD clinics for STD therapy, prostitutes and individuals engaging in sex for drugs and money. This is a hard core group of individuals who view their health care needs as a low priority.

SETTING: Between October 1997 and September 1998, in Palm Beach County, Florida. 472 HIV-positive clients were post-test counseled by STD program staff at the PBCHD. Of the 472 clients, 171 (36%) were identified as HIV-positive repeaters (non-compliant).

PROJECT: The focus of the Project is to provide intensive, individualized support and prevention counseling to reduce the risk for HIV transmission to others. It is intended for persons who are having, or who are likely to have, difficulty initiating and sustaining safer sex behavior. The counseling is done by persons at the masters' level and with extensive experience with substance-abuse-type clients. The counselor is involved in the assessment of HIV risk behavior, psychosocial issues and medical referrals. Our hypothesis is that by providing stability in the lives of these clients through early clinical care, behavioral change may take place that leads to decreased HIV transmission.

RESULTS: The Project identified 171 HIV-positive repeaters between October 1997 and September 1998. Of the 171, 136 (79.5%) were provided with services that included comprehensive counseling and referrals to other agencies within the community. Fifty-eight (42%) were identified as not having accessed the health care system and had arrangements made for HIV/AIDS case management. Eighty-five (62%) of the 136 clients were identified as substance abusers, of which 19 (14%) were successfully referred and admitted to inpatient drug rehabilitation. Eleven of the clients were pregnant, of which nine were treated with antiretroviral medications.

LESSONS LEARNED: Transportation is a major barrier to obtain services. The client's denial of a drug problem and/or willingness to seek treatment and the legal limitations to enforce treatment is a major problem to ensure successful rehabilitation and medical care. Employability is low among the clients served: lack of education, job and life skills and substance abuse issues remain the main obstacles to reaching self-sufficiency. Our findings suggest that by facilitating the development of self-esteem and adding stability to the client's life, he/she may become more comfortable and confident in society, take better care of themselves and make better choices and reduce the transmission of the HIV virus.

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